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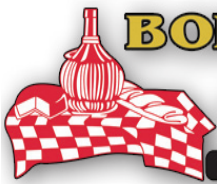
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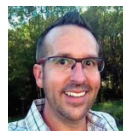


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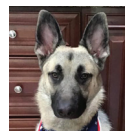
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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

John Ratonski World War II US Navy Seabee and New York City Cop

John Cuddy

VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

Retired New York City Police Officer, John Joseph Ratonski, tried to enlist in the Marine Corps the year after Pearl Harbor, in December of 1942. Joe, as he was known to his friends, was found to be color blind, and the Marines rejected him for this reason. The US Marine recruiter told him about the newly formed construction unit known as the US Navy Seabees. The first units

were organized in Quonset Point, Rhode Island on March 5, 1942. Joe was born on June 5, 1922 in the Bronx, New York City, NY, making him twenty at the time of enlistment. This made Joe young by Seabee standards, as most World War II Seabees were around thirty-four years old, the Seabees usually recruited only seasoned construction workers. During World War II, the average US Marine rifleman was only nineteen, Seabees on the other hand, had construction

workers in their fifties and sixties, serving during the war.

Upon completion of US Navy Basic Training, he was assigned to the 6th Special Naval Construction Battalion, a Seabee Combat Stevedore Battalion. In May of 1943, he was deployed to the South Pacific with the 6th Special Seabee Battalion. This unit has the distinction of being the first Special Seabee Battalion to participate in an amphibious landing, under hostile fire, at Vella Lavella on October 1, 1943 in the Solomon Islands. He later described his delight to his family, his learning that two ships in his convoy are loaded with frozen Thanksgiving turkeys, both arriving on Monday November 22, 1943.

Days later, on November 29th, as he described events years later to his son, Joe recalled his comrades shooting at night at a group of Japanese planes attacking them, from his position, he could see the tracers were "too low to stop the attacking planes". From 1943 to 1945 the 6th Special NCB Battalion was posted in Fiji, Noumea, Guadalcanal, Vella Lavella, Banika, Puruata, Bougainville, Emirau, Samar and Ulithi.

Nearly eighty percent of the nearly 500,000 men who served in the Seabees during World War II, served in the Pacific Theater. Hollywood, focused on the war in the South Pacific, with



Republic Pictures, releasing the film, "The Fighting Seabees" starring John Wayne and Susan Hayward in 1944. But Seabees entered the Pacific war much farther North in Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. The Japanese captured the islands of Attu and Kiska. Seabees sent to the Aleutians were there to help forestall what appeared, at the time, to be a major Japanese offensive. By late June 1942, they had begun building bases on the islands of Adak and



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Local Civic Organizations Help Us Through Covid

While it is clear that most of our elected leaders have failed us through this Covid crisis, local organizations and civic groups have picked up the slack and filled the void of leadership in helping people cope with the devastation.

House Passes Balanced Budget; State Grants Coming to Merrimack Valley

Rep. Linda Dean Campbell
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains a tremendous need for food assistance in Massachusetts, as our economy has been particularly hard hit and unemployment numbers are through the roof. If you are in need of food assistance, the Project Bread Hotline can connect you to resources: 1-800-645-8333. If you are able to provide support, visit the Merrimack Valley Food Bank's website at www.mvfb.org/how-to-help/, or use the Greater Boston Food Bank's food pantry map to find a local organization to support: www.gbfb.org/need-food/.

On Beacon Hill
In November, I joined my colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass a state budget that will carry us until next July. This budget addresses immediate needs of many that are directly affected by this pandemic. It focuses on providing food and temporary shelter for those in need, as well as supporting our cities and towns with the increased challenges they face with providing services and public education. We did this by providing level funding from last year in most areas and increasing spending slightly on the areas identified above. We also used a portion of our rainy-day fund to compensate

for revenue declines resulting from the pandemic. This targeted use of funds allowed us to pass a budget without raising taxes.

As Chair of the Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, I am proud that the House budget allocated over \$149 million for programs administered by the Department of Veterans' Services and our two Soldiers' Homes - an increase of \$1.3 million over last year. The increased funding focuses on social services, housing services, and mental health care. Notably, the House budget includes \$750,000 for Home Base, a program of Massachusetts General Hospital and the Red Sox Foundation that is working to expand gold-standard Veterans' mental health services across Massachusetts.

In the District
Methuen and Haverhill have both received state MassWorks grants to carry out major infrastructure projects that will promote economic development. Methuen has received \$990,000 to redesign the intersection of Charles Street and Lawrence Street, including a new retaining wall, 14 new on-street parking spaces, an expanded parking lot, roadway safety modifications, and new sidewalks and crosswalks for ADA accessibility. This project will make the downtown area safer and more convenient and support other development projects that will bring in



new housing and businesses.
Haverhill has received \$1,950,000 to go toward a mixed-use development at the site of the former Ornsteen Heel factory in Bradford. The development will include 290 market-rate housing units, 10,000 square feet for retail businesses and restaurants, 33,000 square feet of parks and playgrounds, public amenities such as an amphitheater and a kayak launch, and roadway improvements by the Comeau Bridge. This project is expected to generate significant revenue for the City (\$19 million over 20 years), as well as create jobs, for which Haverhill residents will be given priority.
Hard work and teamwork paid off with the \$200,000 I was able to obtain in last year's state budget to resurface the Methuen track! The new track is now

completed and open for use by students and the community. My House colleagues all helped to bring this to Methuen – so thank you, Reps. Minicucci and Moran! The City of Methuen, particularly Bill Buckley, our Community Development Director, and Superintendent Kwong, worked closely with the Baker Administration to get this done. Our community deserves a track that students are proud of and our community can use for many purposes.
State Representative Linda Dean Campbell represents the cities of Methuen and Haverhill in the State Legislature and serves as House Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs. She can be reached at Linda.Campbell@mahouse.gov or (617) 722-2380. ♦

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A photograph of a smiling man, Bryan, wearing a blue t-shirt and a blue fedora-style hat. He is holding a professional video camera with a large lens. The background is a solid dark grey.

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The Valley Patriot is not responsible for, nor do we necessarily share the opinions of columnists and contributors that are published in the paper. Columns, by definition, are opinion pieces.

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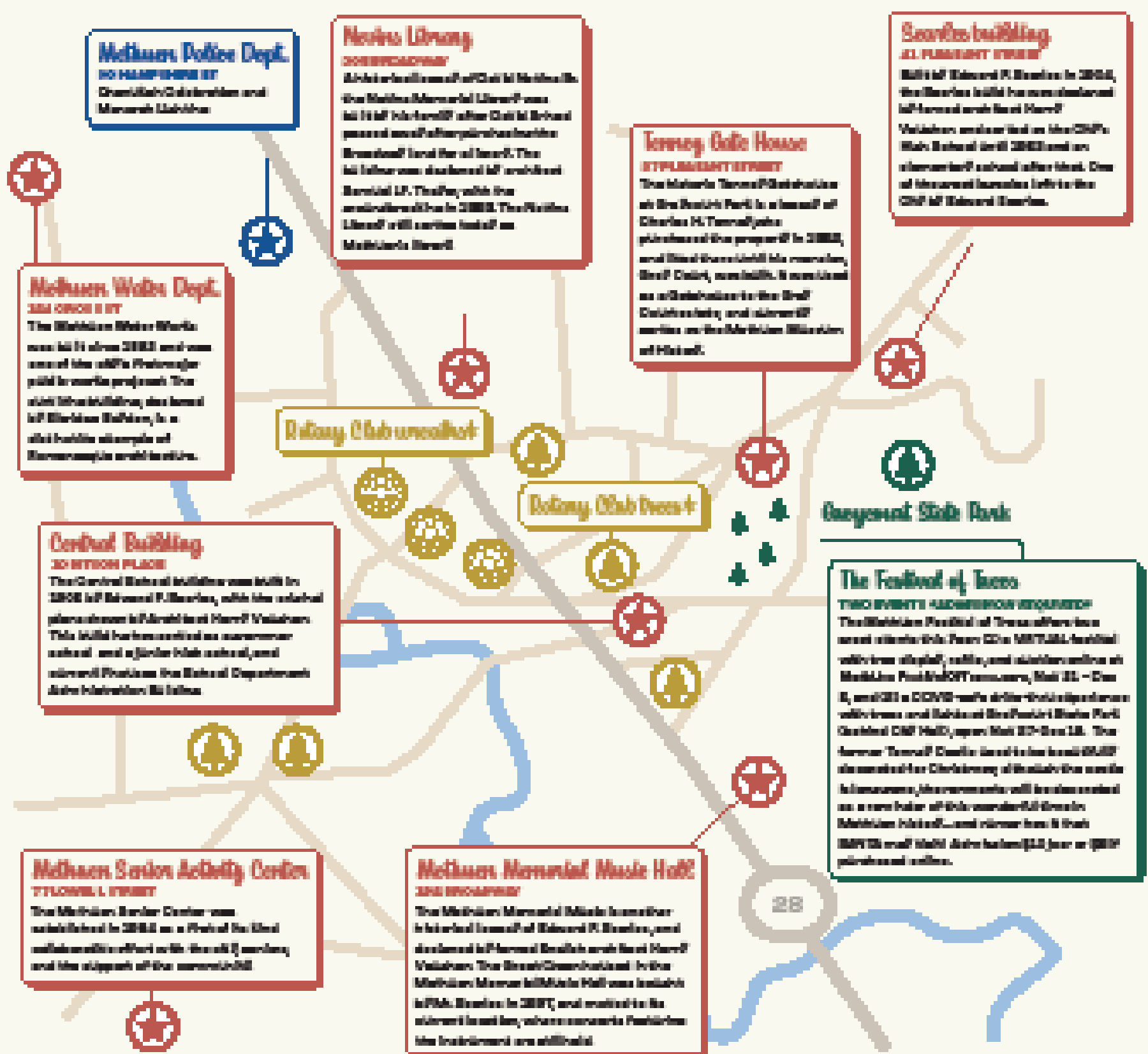
The Valley Patriot can be found in more than 800 locations in 48 communities in Massachusetts and NH.

Methuen's Historical Holiday Light Tour

The City of Methuen was originally organized as a town in 1725 when Lt. Stephen Barker petitioned to divide the Town of Haverhill. As we round the bend to our tricentennial, we are starting to reflect on our history! Join us on a self-guided historical holiday light tour to celebrate the joy of the holiday season and all Methuen has to offer. Enjoy some of Methuen's magnificent historical buildings now decorated in lights, and learn some fun facts about the city along the route. Did you know that Governor Dummer signed the act establishing the Town of Methuen, naming it in honor of Sir Paul Methuen, a friend of the Governor's and member of the King's Privy Council? Did you know that the first Town Meeting was held March 8, 1728? Continue with us on this journey to learn more about Methuen!"

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★ Starting Dec. 8, only 12 noncitizens/nonresidents 18 years across Medicaid, prohibited long-term care with Medicaid (Medicaid Reform) (State and local governments). For a full list of Medicaid Reform Terms, see www.irs.gov/individuals/medicaid-reform or call 1-800-832-7672.

IN YOUR CORNER with SENATOR DIZOGLIO

Fighting to Bring Your Tax Money Back to The Valley

Hello Valley Patriot Readers,

The Legislature recently passed a budget for Fiscal Year 2021. The package includes important investments in sectors impacted by COVID-19, including public health, education and childcare, food security and housing supports.

Locally, the budget includes \$200,000 toward the establishment of a first-ever Methuen Youth and Community Center, bringing us one step closer to making the dream of this project a reality. The package also includes important funds toward our chambers of commerce, who have worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to assist local small businesses who have faced one challenge after another.

During budget debate, I spent much of my focus fighting for amendments I sponsored that I believe are essential to easing the pandemic’s toll on our restaurants, pubs, and other small businesses.

During the shutdown, people have been flocking online for many of their purchases. As a result, online giants like Amazon have reaped heavy rewards from online traffic and are thriving more than ever, while our local retailers slowly creep back to simple survival mode. During a time when much of our small business community was prohibited from making in-person sales, retail giants like Walmart continued to make both in-person and online sales, further contributing to the power gap between them and our neighbors on Main Street.

Action is long overdue to ensure our

small businesses get the technological assistance they need to cope with the times. That is why I filed to the budget an amendment establishing a one-stop shop web portal and interactive database for small business assistance. The legislation creates a network of Massachusetts manufacturers and suppliers to help promote local business and economic growth and also establishes a MassMade designation for products manufactured right here in the Commonwealth.

The portal would help connect local small businesses with local consumers by providing a “Supply Mass, Buy Mass” interactive searchable database for shoppers to find what they need locally, instead of having to rely on the giants like Amazon and Walmart to purchase what they need.

This is a tool for small businesses that would be of tremendous help in this COVID-19 age of virtual communication. As we witness shortages of personal protective equipment, it is clear that having online accessibility to producers who make those items or who could pivot their capabilities toward making those items is critical.

I also filed legislation to the budget expanding Small Business Saturday to Small Business Saturday and Sunday in 2021 to encourage shopping local and bolster economic growth, as well as legislation creating a \$1 million relief fund for newer small businesses who are struggling but haven’t been able to qualify for grants up to this point.

MONEY: NEXT PAGE

WEATHER 101 with AL KAPRIELIAN

Winter is Officially Here

Welcome to December which officially begins the winter season with the winter solstice before month’s end. During December we see the shortest days with the least amount of daylight. By month’s end we begin to see days slowly start to get longer once again. Recapping November we saw some warm days with high temperatures in the 70s.

This warm weather was caused by an unusually strong upper level high pressure system off the east coast of the US. This strong upper level high pressure system forced the jet stream north of our region. As a result, we were on the south side (warm side) of the jet stream.

We saw some new record high temperatures during November. On November 11th new record high temperatures occurred, they are as follows: Boston reached 73 degrees, old record was 69 degrees in 1966 & 2002. Providence, Rhode Island reached 74 degrees, old record was 68 degrees in 1966. Bradley, CT reached 72 degrees, old record was 69 degrees in 1977. Worcester reached 68 degrees; old record was 66 degrees in 1935. Concord, New Hampshire reached 73 degrees, old record was 70 degrees in 2002.

The strong upper level high pressure system caused many consecutive days above 70 degrees from November 5 through November 11. Concord, New Hampshire saw a high temperature of 77 degrees on November 7 and 76 degrees on November 10. Manchester, New Hampshire had a high temperature of 78 degrees on November 7 and 77 degrees on November 10.

Many towns in the Merrimack Valley also saw 70+ degree high temperatures in the period from November 5 through November 11. Some towns broke records for the most consecutive days of high temperatures reaching 70+ degrees.

Bradley, CT had 7 consecutive days with temperatures of 70+ degrees, old record was 4 days. Providence, Rhode Island had 6 consecutive days with temperatures of 70+ degrees, old record was 4 days. This was remarkable and somewhat unusual with so many days in a row of 70+ degree temperatures so late in the year. This was definite tee shirts and shorts weather. In addition to record high temperatures, broken new record high (minimum) low temperature occurred on the early morning of November 11th. Bradley, CT had a low temperature of 56 degrees; old record was 55 degrees in 2002. Worcester also set a new record high (minimum) low temperature on the early morning of November 11th.

Worcester had a low temperature of 57 degrees; old record was 53 degrees in 2002. There were also some chilly days in November, however, many areas saw warmer than normal temperatures for the month of November. One of the best weather days of the month was Sunday November 29.

We saw 100 per cent sunshine as high pressure was in control. This high pressure caused sinking air. When air

sinks it compresses and this causes the air to warm and dry. Clouds have trouble forming when you have sinking dry air (compression). When we have sinking air, in weather, this caused subsidence.

However, clouds quickly increased during the night of November 29. An intense low pressure system brought heavy rain & strong winds on the last day of November the 30th. What a stark contrast from the clear sky and sunshine just the day before.

The low pressure system on November 30th tracked to the west of New England. This put our region on the east side (warmer) side of the low pressure system with strong south/southeast winds. The strongest winds occurred along the coast. Some wind gusts were as follows: Rockport gusted to 63 miles per hour, Mashpee on Cape cod gusted to 62 miles per hour. Blue Hill Coop had a gust to 81 miles per hour. Lawrence and Beverly airports has gusts to 45 miles per hour. Due to the strong winds there were numerous power outages caused by trees and tree branches falling onto power lines.

Rainfall amounts were 1-2” with some areas getting higher amounts. This heavy rain continued to put a dent in our drought. Tropical weather continued to be active in November. Hurricane Eta, a Category 4 hurricane, moved across the Florida Keys just southwest of the Florida coast. Eta then tracked west as it was steered by High Pressure in the Gulf of Mexico and southeast US. The 30th named storm of this year’s hurricane season was Hurricane Iota which was a category 5.

Hurricane Iota was the strongest Atlantic hurricane so late in November and the only hurricane in the Greek alphabet to reach Category 5 status, the highest category of hurricane classification. Iota was the 30th named storm of this year’s hurricane season. This was a record 30 named storms; the old record was 28 storms in 2005. Iota moved across Central America with flooding rains and strong damaging winds. Hurricane season ended on November 30th. It is still possible to see a hurricane or tropical storm in December. Next month we will recap December’s weather.

Before I close, The Climate Prediction Center has predicted LA Nina to continue through the winter. La Nina occurs when the south Pacific Ocean is colder than normal. La Nina can impact the Jet stream and how it tracks. With La Nina, winter’s temperatures can be warmer than normal over much of the east/ southeast U.S. including New England with below average snowfall. In contrast Lan Nina can bring colder than normal weather with above average snow over the Northern Plains and Rockies out west.

We will see if the above scenario pans out as we go through time. In the meantime prepare for winter and stay safe!!! ◇

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Exclusively for The Valley Patriot

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PERRY: PAGE 5

MONEY: FROM PAGE 4

Many new small businesses have been unable to qualify for financial assistance because they lack the “operational and income history” to qualify for certain grant opportunities. This is crushing to those business owners and we should not penalize them simply because they opened their business close to the start of the pandemic.

While these measures were included in the Senate Budget, they unfortunately did not make it across the finish line when

a compromise was struck between the Senate and House versions of the budget. I am hardly, however, done fighting for them.

There remains significant work to be done in supporting our small businesses and economy. Our mom and pop shops have waited long enough for relief and it is time the Legislature steps it up. As always please feel free to reach out to me at 978-984-7747 or Diana.DiZoglio@masenate.gov - Yours in service. ♦



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METHUEN REPORT CARDS

With a new mayor and city council in Methuen taking the reigns of power in January The Valley Patriot has been keeping track of who is serving the people of Methuen and who is there to serve themselves. Below is our report card of the mayor and councilors for 2020. Our editors, staff and volunteers all had input on these evaluations.

DAVE BEAUREGARD – Beauregard was elected at-large (city wide) last year to his first term on the city council. He is the former intern for former Methuen Mayor Bill Manzi and has been working on campaigns in Methuen for the last 15 years. With a calm and deliberative demeanor, most who know Dave thought he would spend his first year staying out of controversy and learning the job. For the most part, they were right. Beauregard acted far more mature and professional than most of his colleagues in the last year. But, he also seemed to have no problem grandstanding and throwing a few bombs during contentious city council meetings. This led to yelling matches between councilors, and in his defense, yelling matches that he did not take part in himself.


We will write those incidents off as rookie mistakes as he has also been the one at the table who, from time to time, tried to deescalate explosive arguments among his colleagues. Beauregard has also been proactive in bringing new issues to the table rather than waiting for someone else to do the work.

As for transparency, like most of his colleagues, Dave talks a good game. He and his colleagues have done an awful lot of behind the scenes plotting on who is to make motions before meetings, garnering votes for his proposals, and coordinating with other councilors on who is going to say what on certain issues when they meet in public.

In January, he gave his word that he would vote for Eunice Zeigler for council chairman. But after behind the scenes politicking with fellow councilors, Beauregard broke his word and voted for Jim McCarty. There was nothing transparent about that, and coincidentally he was rewarded by being elected city council vice-chairman.

On the city budget, Beauregard exceeded expectations. Being new, nobody expected him to shine at budget time, but he did. It was clear during budget hearings that Dave is very concerned with how Methuen tax dollars are spent. He obviously read the budget, and asked detailed questions. He made numerous suggested cuts, and eventually approved Mayor Perry’s budget after helping to trim it down.

TOM DUGGAN’S NOTEBOOK



WINSTON SAYS: “”

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His real weakness is policy. As a new councilor there is obviously a learning curve in understanding all the city policies and council procedures. This is why he should not have been chosen vice-chair of the council. As vice-chair he has never once fulfilled his obligation to take the gavel when the chairman is giving an opinion on an issue. He seems – at times – more interested in pleasing his colleagues than standing up alone and defending the council’s policies and procedures when his colleagues break them.

We understand that Beauregard often confuses the difference between editorial opinions and objective news coverage, and as such, has publicly attacked this newspaper because he doesn’t like our views. Nevertheless, Beauregard has represented the city voters well.

BUDGET: B
POLICY: D
CONDUCT: B+
OVERALL: B

JAMES MCCARTY - McCarty represents the Central District of Methuen. He is in his second year as a city councilor and was elected city council chairman in January. Those who know McCarty and witnessed his shenanigans in the last two years were not disappointed as he abused his position again this year, except now as city council president. For the first few months of 2020, McCarty ran the meetings professionally and was mostly respectful at the council table. After that he fell apart.

Despite the fact that the Methuen Charter states that the mayor and

members of the public are allowed to put items on the city council agenda, McCarty censored both the mayor and the public by refusing to let the put items on the agenda, refusing to let the mayor speak at meetings - even when he was being attacked, and refused to let members of the public from put issues on the agenda, falsely claiming that a city councilor must sponsor an agenda item submitted by the public. He frequently makes behind the scenes deals and while ironically using the word “transparency” at every meeting.

McCarty refuses to pass the gavel when he gives his opinion on issues at the table in violation of council policy. At one meeting he violated the federal HIPPA law which makes it illegal to reveal an employee’s medical information. He did this because of his hatred for certain Methuen cops whom he blames for the controversial superior officer’s contract. He has also engaged in yelling fits at the council table, one of which was so outrageous that his colleagues told him they would not support him again for council chairman in January, prompting McCarty to pre-emptively announce last month that he will not run for council chairman again in January.

Despite his bad behavior and personal agendas, McCarty is no dummy. He worked diligently on the city budget, trying to trim it down to bare bones despite the fact that he is a tax and spend left-winger in his personal politics.

He knows the policies well and is quick to attack others for not following the rules, though he is not really good at following them himself.

He is proactive (which is always good in an elected official) taking on several issues that are important to voters such as working with constituents to try and implement a chicken policy for the city, a marijuana policy for the city, and has twice tried to change the city charter to make it more effective, at least in his opinion. If not for being proactive and doing a responsible job with the city budget, McCarty would have gotten an F

for his overall grade.

BUDGET: A
POLICY: F
CONDUCT: D-
OVERALL: C-

NICK DIZOGLIO - Having served on the school committee during the Judy Scannell fiasco, DiZoglio should seem right at home on the 2020 city council. In his first year as a city councilor, (elected city wide) DiZoglio has shown that he is neither a yes man for anyone, nor is he no man against anyone. When Mayor Perry puts something before the council and DiZoglio agrees with it, he votes yes, if not, he votes no. He hasn’t been seen voting against something just because of who puts it on the agenda as some of his colleagues do. He is well versed in city policy and city council procedure and spent a lot of time on the city budget trying to not only cut unnecessary spending, but also making sure those cuts would not result in an interruption of services for Methuen residents. His extensive knowledge of budgets makes him an asset to the council as he never tried to use the budget as a tool to go after specific city employees the way others have done.

Nick has been involved in a few dust ups on the council but it’s usually when he is defending himself against personal attacks by other councilors. He does get emotional and tends to take things personal, sometimes when it’s not personal at all which is a weakness that gets in the way of building alliances.

BUDGET: A
POLICY: A
CONDUCT: C
OVERALL: B+

MIKE SIMARD - Simard represents the West End of Methuen and is serving his first term on the city council. He came into office with a lot of goodwill as he is widely known as a hero police officer in Lawrence. Simard is the recipient of the Officer Tom Duggan, Sr., Hero Police Officer award in 2017, and has been highly praised over the years for his bravery as a law enforcement officer.

While Simard is obviously great at being a police officer, and is known as a “nice guy”, his first year on the committee has been marred with conflict. Simard has attacked city employees from the council table - by name - attacked this media outlet despite the positive press he has always received, and had to apologize at least twice for insulting city employees during council meetings.

There is no question that Simard came into this job with pre-conceived notions about the police department and the chief. He was quite open about the fact that he is friends with several officers in Methuen who have been disciplined by Chief Solomon and he was looking to get even. He stated his number one priority was to go after the “corrupt” police department. He has certainly kept that promise.

This has delighted Methuen residents who have soured on the chief over the years and object to how much money the

NOTEBOOK: NEXT PAGE



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chief makes.

Simard’s obsession with taking down the police chief has made him a hero to those who believe Solomon is bad chief but, to date, Simard has not been able to provide any actual evidence that he chief is corrupt. When asked by this newspaper to provide proof that the chief is corrupt, he refused, saying he doesn’t trust us. But, that doesn’t explain why he hasn’t ever provided any evidence of “corruption” to he Globe, Herald, or Eagle Tribune.

Simard also went after the police department for having 29 take home cars, and the use of intermittent (temporary) police officers, a practice that has long been outdated.

As the result of Simard’s efforts, Mayor Perry filed legislation to do away with intermittent officers and also took away more than half the number of take home cars used by Methuen Police.

We take no issue with Simards efforts on these two issues as his actions are saving taxpayer dollars and making the department more efficient. Good for him!

We do however, take issue with the way he has persoally attacked indivdual city workers and how he has tried to micromanage the police department.

At one point Simard attacked two police superiors because “no cop should be making that kind of money and I’m a police officer so I know” he said at one meeting, following up by complaining that “they don’t even live in Methuen.”

This seems hypocritical since Simard himself is a Lawrence cop who does not live in Lawrence, and made \$197,000 last year. Over the past four years Simard was paid more than \$670,000 as a Lawrence cop who does not live in Lawrence.

We have never begrudged Simard or any cop making a ton of money, most of that comes from overtime, court time, and private details. We just find it odd that he is attacking others for exactly what he is doing himself.

On the budget, Simard is very knownledgable and did all he could to try and trim the mayor’s spending plan. He asked pointed questions during budget discussions, worked with his fellow councilors to make city spending more efficient, and when the budget hearings were over, voted to approve Mayor Perry’s budget.

On policy, Simard is also very knowledgable, but sometimes seems to forgets that the role as a city councilor

is not to be the chief admistrator of city departments, but to approve budgets and policy (city ordinances). Nonetheless, his work on making city spending more efficient in all departments has been stellar. His knowledge of municipal laws and grants is also stellar and make him an asset to the council. We believe that if Simard simply stopped attacking people at public meetings everyone would be better off. He can still accomplish what he wants to do with the chief, the police department, and other departments without the hate and vitriole.

BUDGET: B-
POLICY: B
CONDUCT: F
OVERALL: C-

EUNICE ZEIGLER - Eunice is in her second term on the city council and represents the East End of Methuen. It’s hard to find a more responsible and respectable elected official in the Valley. Unlike some of her colleagues, Ziegler does not get involved in the politics of personal destruction and sees her job on the council as a way to help bring people together.

She is proactive, willing to work with anyone to get something done, and doesn’t grandstand on issues she knows nothing about. During one meeting when her colleagues were yelling and pounding their fists in fake outrage over an issue they didn’t know anything about, Zeigler refrained from jumping on the bandwagon and instead reached out to the person being maligned to actually find out what happened. That is what responsible elected officials do; do your homework, get the information first, and THEN make public statements if you think they need to be made. If only more councilors were like that. She also has no interest in playing politics at the council table.

As one example, she had commitments from the majority of her fellow councilors to be council chairman back in January. When those who gave their word, broke their word and voted for someone else, she didnt look to get revenge. She didnt take her anger or dissapintment out on those who lied to her. She simply moved on like a grown up, and put the issue behind her.

On the city budget she worked diligently to make sure cuts being made did not interrupt or diminish services to

NOTEBOOK: PAGE 12



Zoom Call with the Homeless Dogs at The Humane Society

Kane visited the Lowell Humane Society to learn about the dog adoption program. Since he was a rescue himself, he wanted to understand how other dogs became homeless, how they prepared for adoption, and how could he support the resident dogs in finding a forever home. Kane decided the best way to go about this was to interview Crystal Arnott, Communications & Fundraising Manager, at the Lowell Humane Society and host a coffee hour with a few of the dogs in residence. .

Kane said Crystal is very smart and not only knows all about the dogs, she runs fundraisers so she can finance the medical , housing, and adoption needs of the homeless animals. Can you believe she has been doing this for 12 years which in dog’s years is a very long time? Thank you Crystal, wonder how many dogs like me you have helped find their forever home.

I asked Crystal how do most dogs come to the Humane Society? She said the most common reason is landlord issues. “Many rental apartments do not allow dogs,” Crystal said. She also explained that dogs come in due to medical expenses and conditions, behavioral issues, (bigger than eating your own poop, like me), and stray dogs found in the local community. This made me sad because it must be lonely out there alone in the world.

Crystal explained to me how the dogs became ready for adoption. She said it was important for them to settle in and become familiar with the people and the environment. The resident dogs go out with staff and or volunteer dog walkers three times a day. They can also play in the play yard. Dogs are socialized in different environments such as car rides, going to events and walks in the woods. I told Crystal I like to walk in the woods. Crystal told me the animal shelter uses positive reinforcement and a caring gentle disposition so the dogs can build trust with the staff and volunteers. I agreed with Crystal; being kind is the way to go.

Crystal said each dog has an evaluation

to learn more in depth information about the adoptable pet. Kane thought it made sense to know if the dogs liked other dogs or cats; whether they feel comfortable with children or how much energy they have. Crystal told Kane the evaluation provides information on what type of household would be the best match for the pet since the goal is for the dog to be happy and successful in their forever home.

I asked Crystal how does the Humane Society family find a good match for the homeless dogs. She said social media and word of mouth is the key. I didn’t tell her I started online dating, I wonder if she saw my profile. She said potential families are screened by checking with their vet in regard to the care of previous pets, making sure the family can provide the medical care needed, and the special needs of the each dogs are discussed.

Crystal said it’s important to provide as much information about the animal as possible including behavioral challenges and social needs. For example if the dog doesn’t like cats it doesn’t make sense to put them in a home with a cat. I had trouble looking at Crystal because maybe she knew about the bunny in the backyard I try to chase. I try not to, but I do it anyways. I bet Crystal doesn’t chase bunnies.

I asked Crystal how could the community support the mission of the Humane Society and help the dogs find forever homes? She said, “join our family of volunteers, share the social page, and helping with fundraising.” Crystal wants the general public to not forget the small shelters that do great work. She said, “we have had and continue to have great dogs.” She said this year, due to the pandemic, we have had less animals surrendered but also less volunteers have been able to work their shifts due to social distancing, Crystal considers the volunteers to be part of the Lowell Humane Society family, who are currently missed.

I thanked Crystal for her time then went off to my zoom coffee hour with the

KANE: PAGE 14

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2020 Report Cards for Methuen Officials

This year may go down as the year of Covid, but to us, this year represents a year of lies, misinformation, and propaganda.

Back in January Dr. Fauci, and China’s puppets at the World Health Organization said that the Coronavirus could not be transmitted to humans. Advice that resulted in the deaths of thousand of people.

By March, Dr. Fauci and the so-called “experts” told the American people NOT to wear a mask and even said that people are “more likely to contract the virus” by wearing a mask”. Advice that also quite likely killed thousands of people.

Then they said that the public should indeed be wearing masks but that masks do not protect the person wearing it, they protect others from the person who wears a mask.

These same so-called “experts” then chided President Trump saying he would not have contracted the Coronavirus if he was wearing a mask – which would be impossible if they believed their own position that mask wearing only protects others from the person wearing it.

Another piece of advice that likely killed thousands of people.

Finally, the experts have changed their minds yet AGAIN, saying that - NO, NO, we have changed out minds, masks actually protect both the person wearing it and those they come into contact with.

And that’s just the lies surrounding the issue of wearing masks.

When violent riots broke out all over the country by left-wing terrorists, the news media told us in unison that these were “peaceful protests” despite the live video we were seeing of cops being shot, police stations being burned down, and civilians being tortured and killed. The media then lectured us for months that the real “threat to our democracy” was right wing, white supremacists, who have not burned down anything, shot anyone, or killed anyone in these violent riots.

Never during the violent left-wing riots did our politicians or the news media call

them “super spreader events” that would kill people. Yet, when pro-America groups gathered in Washington D.C. to protest lockdowns, suddenly, such protests were super spreader events.

And the lies continued

When President Trump said that based on the science, kids should go back to school, the “experts” and the media accused him of trying to kill people with his ignorance and that children were at high risk! Just last week however, now that Trump has lost the election, Dr. Vauci and “experts” finally admit that the “schools should be open, we know from the science that children do not get sick or die as easily as adults do from the Coronavirus.

Institutions we all trusted prior to this year showed us how corrupt and dishonest they are. During the presidential debates we found out that 100% of the members of the “non-partisan” Presidential Debate Commission was made up of people who had all made public comments about hos much they hated President Trump. That bias showed through when they decided to change the rules of the debates after Trump won the first one.

In 2020 we also learned that Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms were censoring political opinions while each of the heads of those companies sat before congress denying that they were censoring anything.

Your Health with Rick Bellanti

GOUT – The Gift That Keeps On Giving

Rick Bellanti
HEALTH & WELLNESS COLUMNIST

First, I hope everyone is still doing okay during this unprecedented Covid-19 Pandemic. I know it is taking a toll on me and a lot of my friends and family. This isolation may be good for stopping the spread of the virus, but it’s causing a lot of health issues in many people, like depression, anxiety, sleeplessness and overeating, just to name a few.

I recently had a minor Gout attack in my foot, last week. I’ve had issues with it in the past and know all the ins and outs of this disease, so I know taking my daily prescription to keep it at bay is as essential as maintaining a healthy diet. I’m not sure what caused this particular flare up for me, as I was keeping strict with avoiding the foods that trigger a Gout flare up.

As a Gout sufferer for almost 20 years, I thought I could shed a little light on this painful yet manageable disease. You have to know, you can control this disease with healthy eating and prescribed medicine, but it never goes away. You need to be careful as it will lie dormant for a year or two (sometimes more), but whenever it feels like it wants to

So what is Gout?

Gout is a form of painful arthritis and inflammation, and occurs when uric acid crystals build up and settle in your joints. Some people experience it in the knees or elbows, most common is the big toe (which is where mine is). If you have high levels of uric acid in your blood, it’s called hyperuricemia. Your liver metabolizes the uric acid, and the kidneys get rid of it when you go to the bathroom. The levels of uric acid build up when not enough uric acid is eliminated or too much uric acid is being produced. Purines in our food which make the uric acid levels in our blood increase, brings on Gout attacks but also, heightens your risk for developing kidney stones.

When you are experiencing a Gout attack you will notice the effected joint



will feel hot, swollen, even turn red and will become very sensitive to the touch. The onset of pain will increase for 24-48 hours if untreated. Blood and urine tests are always recommended to measure the level of uric acid in your blood. Taking in fluids dilutes the levels of uric acid, so drinking at least 64 ounces of water a day is ideal for breaking down uric acid levels to the point where gout pain decreases.

If you are experiencing Gout flare-ups it could be one of a few reasons and risk factors; males over 40 years old, family members with a history of Gout, Obesity, aspirin medications, a diet consisting of high purine foods or high-fructose drinks (like juices, energy drinks and sodas) and also consuming alcohol on a regular basis. Even though obesity is one of the factors, losing weight too rapidly can also bring on an attack if you are already suffering from high uric acid in the blood.

More often than not, it has to do with our diet and what we are eating. It’s best to stay clear of certain foods when you have high uric acid, those foods with high purine levels should be avoided at all costs such as: game meats like liver, kidneys, goose, duck, pork and lamb, too much red meat and processed meats like cold-cuts, bacon, hotdogs and sausage are very bad. Canned fish like herring, anchovies, crab and sardines are very high in purine. Peanuts and peanut butter and anything with high fructose corn syrup or artificial sweeteners are best to stay clear of, or enjoy very small amounts in your diet (as long as you are not in the middle of a Gout attack).

Alcohol consumption and Gout: Studies have shown that men who drank as little as 4 beers a week increased their chance of Gout attacks by 25%, and those that drink at least two beers a day increased by two hundred percent. That amount jumps another 60% with a hard liquor drink although there have been no signs of increase among wine drinkers.

A clean diet of fresh organic fruits and vegetables, low fat milk and cheeses,

HEALTH: PAGE 16

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Methuen Resident Randy Carter Honored as Volunteer of the Month at Clear Path for Veterans New England

Clear Path for Veterans New England would like to congratulate our Volunteer of the Month for November 2020, Randy Carter.

Thank you to WPKZ Radio for hosting our Volunteer of the Month Awards, along with the following sponsors:

- Olympic Trophy (Worcester)
- Harvard Outdoor Power Equipment

Randy will receive a gift and a plaque for his service to us and to the Veterans of New England, along with having his name engraved on an award that will hang in the halls of Clear Path.

On behalf of Clear Path for Veterans New England we would like to take this opportunity to thank all our important volunteers, especially Jeanne Purcell, our October 2020 Volunteer of the Month!!

Randy Carter entered the Army in 1983, left the Army in 1994 after 11

years and entered the Air Force. He retired from service in 2007 after serving for 24 years. Randy is a Veteran of Desert Storm and Iraqi freedom.

Randy has been building community relations in the Merrimack Valley area on behalf of Clear Path since March of 2020. He spends time coordinating with Methuen Cares and Clear Path by assisting in food distribution in Methuen and surrounding towns. He also has been assisting Veterans with applying for benefits such as SNAP, tax abatements and medical help.

Since March he has helped assist well over 500 families!

Clear Path relies on many volunteers to help us with our mission and Randy has certainly proven to be one very deserving of our Volunteer of the Month Award- Thank you Randy! ♦

Clear Path for Veterans New England

Clear Path for Veterans New England's growth in New England has been contagious and this has shown through the massive partnerships and grant funding collaborations made to date. Clear Path is currently finishing up on its \$2+ million-dollar renovation of its headquarters building in Devens, Massachusetts, to be completed in the next few weeks. It will be a Very Happy New Year for the Veterans of the Commonwealth looking for help.

The building located at 84 Antietam St. Devens MA will house many of their programs to include: Outreach, Housing support/Homelessness Prevention, Employment, K9 service dog program while utilizing veteran staff as Peers that provide the wrap-around services needed for the successful "Journey Home." Many Nonprofits provide a piece of the puzzle while Clear Path provides the wraparound services to include the Wellness approach and service K9 program under one roof. This will be essential when trying to stabilize a veteran family under stressful situations such as homelessness.

Although this past year has been challenging for many non-profits who had to close their doors to our veterans due to lack of funding, Clear Paths doors have remained open, and those benefits have been fruitful for this non-profit. Clear Path for Veterans New England provided their programming with limited funding and donations


but is growing exponentially due to the professional Veteran boots on the ground approach by their staff. Although, they do understand, they could not have done any of it without the opportunity to build and collaborate with Non-Profits such as Mass Military Support foundation Inc. This one partnership ensured Clear Path for Veterans New England the ability to deliver over 14,000 boxes of food throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Creating a relationship with Local VSOs throughout North Central and the North Shore, while utilizing Chelmsford\Westford housing authority which ensured and enabled us to house Veterans more efficiently utilizing an effective and professional approach.

In the coming week, Clear Path for Veterans New England will host the Secretary of Veteran Services Massachusetts, Madame Secretary Cheryl Poppe. It will be an honor to provide the first impression of Clear Path for Veterans New England with the newly seated Secretary while giving an overview of the services and sharing the impact they have made in the Veteran communities across the Commonwealth over the past year and showcasing testimonials and their ability as a team player in the Commonwealth while supporting veterans in need. This is allowing their opportunity to share the Clear Path Vision with the Commonwealth. ♦

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Rebuilding Cities & Relationships

Santiago Reyes Cruz, Jr.
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

As we come to a conclusion to our 2020 Pandemic episodes, we can't help but thank God & all of the wonderful people who united, volunteering & helping out the severely afflicted. For many families & businesses located inside our local communities, 2020 proved to be one of the toughest recent years financially. Remarkably, many of these family owned-businesses were able to stay afloat by the consistent contributions made by loyal neighbors & customers. These same loyal neighbors & customers are the very people helping out across Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill & the Andovers when it comes to the majority of charity/community events.

A specific organization called Exchange Club of Lawrence & the Andovers whose Core Values are: "Family, Community &

Country" set the example by donating \$4,000.00 to the Lawrence MA Boys & Girls Club. The funds went to help cover the costs of Thanksgiving meals which fed over 300 local families. In past times, meals were hosted on site for kids. Due to COVID-19 however, meals were packaged and picked up curbside.

Such acts as demonstrated by the Exchange Club of Lawrence & the Andovers is what's going to help us rebuild mental health in 2021. More now than ever, citizens of Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill & the Andovers must work together in aiding & supporting each other's local charities & business. Therefore, stay

vigilant! Look out for the next community events! With your help, we will continue rebuilding local city relationships & finally putting an end to all dark memories that periodically try and haunt us. United: Yes, We Can Rebuild! ◇



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LAWRENCE: PAGE 17

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Methuen Community Based Needs Assessment



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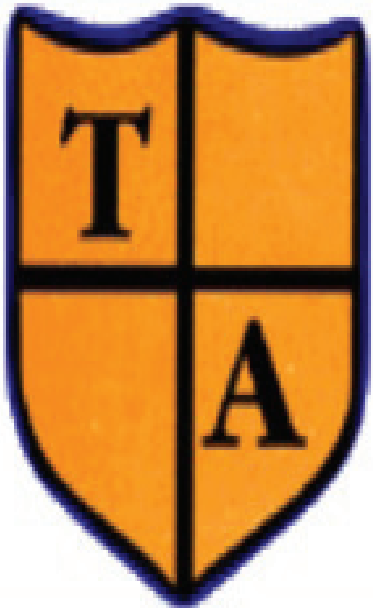
Clear Path for Veterans New England is conducting a community based needs assessment in Methuen, MA.

By completing our survey you are helping us achieve our goal of identifying the current needs of local Veterans, Service Members, and their families.

To take our survey you can either scan the QR code below with your smartphone or enter the following URL into your browser.
https://clearpathnewengland.formstack.com/forms/methuen_needs_assessment

We will also be available to administer this survey in person at the Methuen Senior Center on Wednesdays starting 9/30/20 from 11:30AM - 3:30PM.

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Questions? Contact: StephanieBradbury@AmericanTrainingInc.com

American Training Inc. is a non-profit organization based in the Merrimack Valley that provides housing, education, training & support services to people with disabilities, youth at risk & adult learners who are looking for a pathway towards a more meaningful life.

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This year, because of generous donations, the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Inc. was able to provide 73 complete Thanksgiving dinners to families in need, plus extra bags of groceries! Donating this year was; The Methuen DPW Union, Nevins Library, The Exchange Club, Neighbors in Need, Methuen Credit Union, Pest End Exterminators, Methuen (Central District) City Councilor James McCarty, an anonymous donation of 60 Pies, and Shylah Maloney from the Massachusetts chapter of Claims and Litigation Management CLM. ♦



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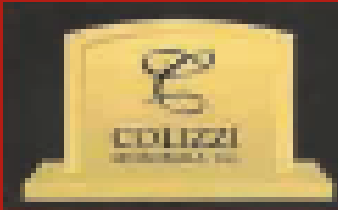
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\$650K MassWorks Award For Dracut Senior Housing Project

State Senator Barry Finegold and State Representative Colleen Garry announced this month that the Town of Dracut will receive \$650,000 in funding through the Baker-Polito Administration’s competitive MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program. The funding will be used for the development of utility, water, and sewer systems at the forthcoming senior housing project at 144 Greenmont Avenue.

“This important MassWorks award will ultimately help expand access to quality, affordable senior housing in the Town of Dracut,” said State Senator Barry Finegold. “I am excited that Dracut won this competitive grant funding, and I look forward to seeing the Greenmont Avenue project come to fruition. COVID-19 has accentuated the crucial role that seniors play in our local community, and we need to continue to support them going forward.”

Dracut is one of 35 communities that received funding through MassWorks’ 2020 funding round. The MassWorks program allocates capital funding to public entities for public infrastructure development. In total, nearly \$68 million was awarded through the program in 2020. Governor Baker, Lt. Governor



Polito, and Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy held a virtual grant ceremony for all awardees on Thursday.

“I’m thrilled that the Greenmont Avenue Senior Housing Project can continue to move forward with these infrastructure funds,” said State Representative Colleen Garry. “It is a great site in the center of town, accessible to public transportation for our seniors.”

The MassWorks award will also help support the creation of pathways connecting the senior housing project to Bridge Street and Greenmont Avenue. “This is fantastic news! This grant brings us one step closer to completing this very important project. The support has been amazing from our State Senator,” Dracut Town Manager Ann Vandal said. ◇

2020 Was A Year of Change in Dracut

Brian Genest
DRACUT COLUMNIST

What a difference a year makes. Unlike 2019, which was filled with controversy and a management shakeup at town hall, 2020 was a time of positive change for Dracut. This year, Dracut got strong new leaders in the town manager’s office, at the police department and on the board of selectmen.

Ann Vandal was hired as town manager, becoming the first woman to hold the top job at town hall. But she’s no stranger. Vandal has served in various roles at Dracut Town Hall for more than 15 years, including town accountant, finance director and assistant town manager. She’s also served as interim town manager twice, before being hired permanently by selectmen.



that town police officers have always been sensitive to issues of fairness and justice and have responded with care and compassion to all members of the community.

Chief Chaput thanked selectmen, the town manager and the community for the show of support.

“The proclamation issued by the board helps make a very difficult job a little bit easier and recognizes the efforts of the outstanding men and women of the Dracut Police Department during these trying times,” Chaput said.

In the annual town election, voters issued a strong mandate for new leadership. In the five-way race for two seats on the board of selectmen, political newcomer Alison Genest topped the ticket, leaving some well-known town politicians in the rear of the pack.

The Dracut Police Department also got a new leader this year. Deputy Police Chief Stephen Chaput was appointed acting police chief in June by Vandal. (Police Chief Peter Bartlett, on a paid leave of absence for several months due to an injury, went out shortly after the Board of Selectmen voted to delay renewing his contract and in the wake of a no-confidence vote by the town’s police unions.)

In a year that saw some politicians trying to defund the police, selectmen stepped up, spoke out and backed the blue, unanimously voting in favor of a resolution supporting the Dracut Police Department.

“The Dracut Board of Selectmen has witnessed our police officers perform to the highest level of professionalism throughout the last several months, during which Massachusetts has suffered through a pandemic, civil unrest and economic shutdown,” the resolution said, also noting

Full disclosure: As Alison’s husband and campaign manager, I’m completely biased about her and her incredible victory. As a columnist, former news reporter and observer of Dracut politics since the late 80s, I’m completely thrilled! Change may come slowly in Dracut, but it has finally arrived.

My wife is a town native, but she isn’t part of the political establishment. And that wasn’t the only thing that made her attractive as a candidate. She has relevant, real-world experience from a 30-year career in the private sector that can help move the town forward. Voters responded, overwhelmingly supporting an experienced outsider with a fresh face and a positive message.

Things are looking up in Dracut! Someone tell the gossip column writers at the Lowell Sun. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

— Brian Genest is chairman of the Dracut Republican Town Committee. ◇

HEALTH: FROM PAGE 8

eggs, brown rice and whole grain breads, almond butter (instead of peanut butter), and drinking plenty of water to flush out those kidneys and medications prescribed by your physician will help keep flare ups from happening. During a flare up 100% Cherry juice or fresh cherries has been known to help alleviate the pain. Losing weight is a plus, so get out there and walk and get more daily exercise in. Burn some calories and eat smart and you’ll feel much better.

Wishing all a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays (however you are celebrating) and a very Happy and healthy New Year!

Rick Bellanti is a health and wellness columnist and is on a journey himself to lose 240lbs, and has lost 140 lbs since the start of 2015. If you have any questions or comments, please post them to his Getting Healthy with Rick Bellanti Facebook page and once a month he will address a few of the topics here. ◇

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Veterans Northeast Outreach Apologizes for “Invoices” Sent to Local Communities

Veterans North East Outreach Center, (VNEOC) a nonprofit in Haverhill, is apologizing for what they say was a poorly executed attempt to get local communities to share unused CARES money (federal funding for COVID expenses) with the non-profit.

VNEOC sparked anger among local Veteran’s Services Officers (VSO) who received an “invoice” from the organization for groceries and other services provided to veterans who live in those towns.

The controversy erupted last month

because the groceries and services they provide to local veterans are already paid for by grants and donations.

After local mayors, town managers, and VSOs complained to the press that they were under no obligation to pay the invoices sent by VNEOC, Scott Forbes, CEO of the non-profit sent a letter to each community with an apology, explaining that it was a “poorly executed” attempt to raise contributions, and had no intent on actually “invoicing” municipalities.

“As a nonprofit with little to no margins when it comes to funding, we wanted

cities and towns to consider investing in what we do here to support the veterans we serve,” the letter stated.

“Yes, I’m here today to tell you that the execution of our message and proposals was far from perfect. We totally failed in this regard. VNEOC does not expect municipalities to pay for services they may or may not have participated in, and I apologize to any VSO that was put in a vicarious position due to the poor execution of our request.”

“Our request should have been framed in this way: if your city or town has additional CARES funding that will not be utilized by the end of the calendar year, please consider supporting VNEOC rather than returning the funds back to the government.”

Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini defended the actions of VNEOC saying that he was baffled when he saw the bill, but had his VSO contact VNEOC to find out what the invoice was really for.

“They made it look like a bill and anyone who looks at it quick, might think

it’s a bill, but it’s not really a bill,” he told The Valley Patriot.

Sources at North Andover Town Hall said that VNOC sent them an “invoice”, one source who asked not to be named said “this is not a request for donations, it’s an invoice no matter what kind of spin they have on it now. I think the bill we got was somewhere in the neighborhood of \$18,000.”

“VNOC has had a long history of helping veterans in dire need of help, said John MacDonald, an Air Force veteran on the board of Veterans Assisting Veterans.

“I know that when vets go there, it’s because they have nowhere else to go. I would hope under this new leadership that VNOC will continue in the vein of John Ratka. Whatever for-profit model they seem to be moving towards – I hope it doesn’t take them away from the primary mission of helping every veteran.”

Forbes, the CEO of VNEOC said that in no way was his organization trying to profit off services that were already paid for by donations and grants. ◇

Tarr Wins Approval for Vehicle Locking Devices for Drunk Drivers

Unlike all other states, Massachusetts stands alone in the nation by not requiring drivers to use an ignition interlock device after they have been convicted for operating a vehicle under the influence.

Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R- Gloucester) successfully championed the adoption of a budget amendment, Strengthening Public Safety Through Interlock Devices, as part of the new Senate state budget. The proposal will authorize the use of interlock devices for first-time offenders.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a national organization dedicated to ending drunk and drugged driving, reports that these deaths have risen 9% since 2014, while arrests are down. “Now is the time to authorize the use of interlock devices for first-time OUI offenders. We have already waited too long to authorize this important tool which can prevent tragedy on our state’s roadways. While we can no longer avoid being the last state in the nation to adopt this smart approach to public safety, we still have an obligation to take action now so that we can stem the pain and harm from the senseless loss of life at the hands of a drunk driver that could have been prevented with time-tested and road-tested technology,” said Senator Tarr.

MADD, who named Tarr one of 45 lawmakers nation-wide with its Legislator of the Year Award, says that over the past dozen years, interlocks have prevented over 39,000 attempts to drive drunk in Massachusetts.

“We are thankful for this amendment, which is a step in the right direction,

making Massachusetts the 50th state with a first-time offender interlock law. This legislation gives more options in the judicial system and allows for the use of ignition interlocks to be ordered for first-time offenders,” said Mary Kate Depamphilis, New England Region Program Director for Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

“This option is critical to allow convicted drunk drivers to learn how to drive sober and be part of society while taking drunk drivers off the road. At MADD, this legislation effort has been over a decade in the making. We are thankful to the lawmakers who have helped push to make this happen, especially Senator Tarr and Representative Whelan.”

Tarr told colleagues during the debate that allowing convicted drunk driving offenders to use vehicles without ignition interlock devices means that there is a loss in the ability to protect the public from the dangers and harm of preventable crashes.

Proponents of the legislation say that removing a convicted driver’s license isn’t fully effective because they can still get behind the wheel and put the vehicle on the road. A more effective approach they say, and one with years’ worth of federal and state data to back it up, would be to require convicted offenders to install an interlock device that tests the alcohol levels of a driver’s breath before the vehicle can be used.

A Conference Committee will now convene to reconcile the differences between the Senate budget and the version passed by the House of Representatives last week. ◇



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HERO: FROM PAGE 1

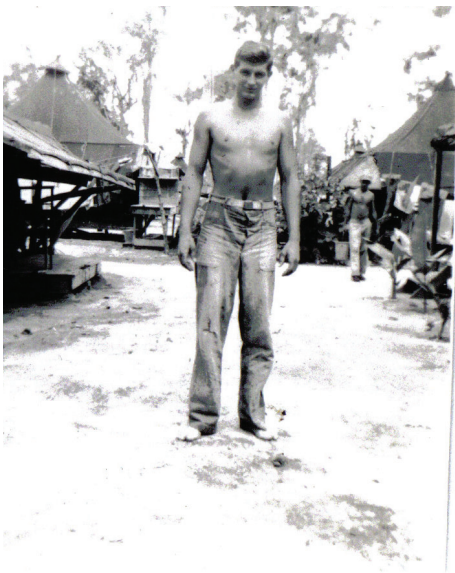
Amchitka. Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines would serve on those islands as a deterrent for the remainder of the war.

Note: I served with the Seabees, forty years later, on Adak Island during 1980 and 1981, and remnants of World War II were still scattered all over the islands. While I was up there, the US Department of Fish and Wildlife, while conducting an outer island survey, found the remains of a US Army soldier that had been missing in action since World War II. The soldier's rifle was still with him, and his military ID and some US Currency was found in his shirt pocket. His remains were returned to his family.

After forming in March of 1942, Seabees crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and North Africa was the site of the Seabees first combat action in the European theater. Landing with the assault in November 1942, they built facilities at Oran, Casablanca, Sifi and Fedala. Later, they would build a string of staging and training areas along the Mediterranean including NAS Port Lyautey, Morocco. Naval Air Station Port Lyautey stayed in operation serving the US Navy until 1942. Seabees served throughout the Mediterranean and Europe during the war, including the Normandy landings.

Joe remained in the 6th Special NCB as a Seaman 1st Class until the end of the War and was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1946. After Japan surrendered, he returned home to New York where he married. He and his new wife had four children. Joe served his community and nation, as a policeman on the New York Police Department and worked in the Bronx, New York. In 1956, he received the Medal of Valor for an incident on December 19, 1956. The Medal of Valor is the third highest Valor award conferred by the New York City Police Department. After a distinguished career that spanned over 30 years he retired as a Detective (1st Class).

While leading an exciting life as a Navy Seabee and New York City Police Officer, Joe and his wife had two sons and two daughters. They also have six grandchildren. Joe Ratomski passed away at Westbury, New York on his



Joe Ratomski

birthday in 1988 at sixty-six years old. Joe's family is scattered all over the Northeastern United States today! Planning in January, to write the second part of this article, featuring a local man, who became a Seabee, and now serves as a Boston police officer, his service separated from Joe by seventy-five years, but little else!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

The Dracut American Legion asks all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368 and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go the American Legion's Web site www.legion.org, and join the American Legion, preserving our Veteran's Benefits for future generations.



John Cuddy served in the US Navy's Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the Navy; he earned a bachelor's in history and a master's in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 23 years. If you know a World War II veteran who would like their story told, please email him at John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com. ♦

SUE PIAZZA'S BOOK CORNER

Jesus, Superpowers, & the Bully: Adventures from the Throne Room

Written by T.M. Barton
© 2020 by T.M. Barton
Genre: Children's Book
Kindle Unlimited Free, Paperback \$9.99
5 of 5 Bookmarkers

Troy, the main character, has a physical disability, something that one rarely reads about in a children's book. His good friend Luke has superpowers. Troy wants the same special powers.

Disappointed at how to obtain these abilities, Troy finally tries the method of obtaining them. This is where Jesus comes in.

What I love about this book is that Jesus is portrayed as a real person, he laughs, gives high fives, hugs Troy. Jesus and His words are told in an easy to read manner and not the preachy Sunday service method people are used to.

Troy's life visiting Jesus goes along well until a new student is introduced to his class. Brock, the new pupil, immediately saw a vulnerability in Troy and began making fun of Troy calling him "nubby". One of Troy's arms never fully form, hence the insulting name. As the school year progressed the bullying escalated.

This book deals with bullies, how they act, what motivates them, and how to cope with someone who tries to hurt someone. Though marked for children between 8-12 I feel it is also relevant for parents with children up until the college age when they should then have enough experience in dealing with these kinds of people to defend themselves. Bullying is, unfortunately, prevalent in today's world.

Eventually, as the story progresses, we

see both the bully and the victim become friends. A believable resolution in this book.

Slow deliberate sentences and paragraphs gently take the reader where the author wants them to go. Sometimes authors are in such a rush to tell the story that they skip over subtle elements. Barton does not do this. A real credit to her writing.

Moreover, black and white illustrations are peppered throughout giving weight to the corresponding theme being written about.

The story is tempered with Biblical passages. While some passages are only given their reference points other passages are written out in detail.

Religion does not hit one over the head. There are some biblical quotes that are woven seamlessly into the plot and rather than make one, me, feel uncomfortable they gave me a sense of peace, love. Quite remarkable.

I could find nothing wrong with this book which is why the high ranking of my review.

Well worth reading. A nice intro to His word for younger children whether the victim of a bully or not. Book's a keeper.

Susan Piazza, a Navy veteran, is an author, columnist, and blogger. She can be found at susanpiazzaauthor.com. Her book, the historical fiction "A Bird Call That Isn't," can be found on Amazon at: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0829MH1RX>. Follow her on her personal Facebook page or at: "A Bird Call That Isn't launch" where you can check out the main characters diary . ♦



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‘The Queen’s Gambit’

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

You don’t have to know the game of chess to enjoy Netflix’s superb binge-worthy new series. ‘The Queen’s Gambit’ is a seven part limited series about a female chess prodigy coming of age during the Cold War.

It begins in a Kentucky orphanage in the late 1950s. A young Beth Harmon is coming to live there after the death of her mother. There she will struggle to find herself in this new place with strict discipline, while also being exposed to several things that will end up as big parts of her life, starting with the tranquilizer Librium. The children at the orphanage are even given these tranquilizers to keep them in line, and Beth quickly develops an addiction problem. Before long she meets the janitor, Mr. Shaibel, and he teaches the other thing that will become pivotal in her life... the game of chess.

Mr. Shaibel soon realizes that Beth is a prodigy and encourages her to play more. Beth becomes obsessed with it and devours everything she can about the game. Reading books about chess and staring at the ceiling every night where, with the aid of the tranquilizers, Beth sees chess pieces come to life and move around an imaginary board, playing out her strategies. Her drug addiction becomes amplified by her belief that she needs the pills to succeed at chess, the one thing in the world she really loves.

After several years Beth is adopted by a woman named Alma Wheatley, an alcoholic whose husband only agreed to the adoption to keep her happy and quiet. Beth gradually forms a strong bond with her new mother, and Alma encourages Beth’s undeniable chess talents. After Alma’s husband leaves her, she and Beth begin to travel the country, and soon the world, where Beth keeps playing chess and winning competitions.

As she begins her rise through the ranks of professional chess players, Beth becomes associated with her almost exclusively male opponents. There’s Harry Beltik, who becomes obsessed with Beth after she beats him for the

Kentucky state title at age 15. D.L. Townes, a dashing older player who immediately catches Beth’s eye. Benny Watts, an American champion who initially dismisses Beth’s talent before eventually helping to train her to take on the world’s best chess players, the Soviets.

The chess sequences that Beth plays are engrossing, but none more so than when she plays the Soviet grandmaster, Vasily Borgov. You cannot help but get lost in the scenes, both when Beth is developing her strategies in her mind and when she’s about to fall back into some old bad habits. It proves just how much the top notch writing and acting here can get you caught up in this fascinating world.

Anya Taylor-Joy (Peaky Blinders) is brilliant and mesmerizing as Beth, giving one of the best television performances of the year. The rest of the cast is excellent as well, including terrific work from Bill Camp as Mr. Shiabele, Marielle Heller as Alma, and Harry Melling as Harry Beltik.

The series is directed by Scott Frank, and is based on Walter Tevis 1983 novel of the same name. Tevis was also the author of such well known titles as ‘The Hustler,’ ‘The Color of Money,’ and ‘The Man Who Fell To Earth.’

‘The Queen’s Gambit’ is one of the best shows of 2020. It is a riveting, smart, and immensely entertaining seven episodes that is well worth the time invested in it. It is available to stream on Netflix.

Consider this my Christmas gift to you. Watch ‘The Queen’s Gambit.’



If you have any questions about TV you can email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVTalk and on Facebook at BillsTVTalk for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion. ♦



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Prophecy

That the Church may Receive Edification!

Peter Larocque
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

God Bless and welcome to my third column dedicated to the manifestations or evidence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The first column was on speaking in tongues and the second was on the benefits to the individual who speaks in tongues.

In this column, I would like to cover the third speaking manifestation which is Prophecy which benefits all those who are presently gathered together (The Church) and not just the individual speaking.

First, please allow me to address some of the wrong teaching or miss-guided information that has crept into the church concerning Prophecy. When most people today think of Prophecy, they think of foretelling the future. The truth is that foretelling the future is only a very small part of Prophecy.

Prophesying has two components to it; one being foretelling future events and the second and most common is forthtelling which is simply bringing forth a message from God to the Church in the language of the majority of the people present. We read in 1 Corinthians 14:3, “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” NKJV. The main purpose for Prophecy today is that the Church, The Body of Christ, may receive EDIFICATION, EXHORTATION or COMFORT!!! The next verse says, 1 Corinthians 14:4, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.” NKJV. God wants His Church Edified!

Another important point about Prophecy is found in 1 Corinthians 13:9, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part.” NKJV. Prophecy is just in part, not the whole story! God will give just enough so that the Church, the body of believers or in a case where the person prophesying is speaking specifically to one individual, receives edification, exhortation and comfort.

1 Corinthians 14:1, reads as follows, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” NKJV. God says desiring spiritual gifts and Prophecy is good as long as it is in the context of promoting The Love of God and not the individual speaking! A message from God given through Prophecy will never shame or condemn. It will always edify, exhort and comfort! We are living in the time of the New Testament Church, The Age of Grace!

Since the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ along with the introduction of the New Covenant of God’s Grace, messages brought forth in Prophecy must be in agreement. Today we are in the Age of Grace, meaning God’s Unmerited, Unearned and Undeserved Favor rules the day. Prophecies filled with

the Law, Fire and Brimstone or containing God’s anger and wrath are over!

We must remember God is not mad at us but is madly in love with us because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross! So, if someone comes to you with a message from God filled with anger or wrath, it must be weighed against New Testament Scripture! Prophecy filled the Old Testament Law and have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ! Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” NKJV. Ephesians 4:29, adds, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” NKJV.

Now, as we go a little deeper, we must begin by reading 1 Corinthians 12:1, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. NKJV. This word, spiritual, is the Greek word pneumatikos, which means, matters belonging to, determined or influenced by, or proceeding from the spirit, Spiritual Matters. God does not want his people ignorant when it comes to spiritual matters but for the most part, this hasn’t been the case.

Why is that? Keep reading, 1 Corinthians 12:2, “You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.” NKJV. People can’t believe beyond that which they have been led or taught. There are Christian leaders who look critically upon individuals who dabble in spiritual matters or those who go off into spiritualism, (which is a system of belief or religious practice based on supposed communication with the spirits of the dead, especially through mediums.) I do not condone this dabbling, but I understand why one would look in this direction because information on true spiritual matters emanating from the Church is limited.

Who is teaching the true spiritual matters today? God’s people are left to going to you-tube or google. Look at 1 Corinthians 14:39, “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.” NKJV. God wants his people to desire to Prophecy and wants His Church to not forbid speaking in tongues! Why? Because God wants His Church, His people to receive Edification, Exhortation and Comfort!

I will continue next month with more on Prophecy, but for now, my prayer is that through these series of Columns, light is shed on Spiritual Matters and encourage someone to lovingly ask their Pastors and Church leaders to be taught from Holy Scripture the truth concerning Spiritual Matters.

God Bless you all and Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year! 2021, The Best is yet to come!

Peter Larocque
peterlarocque@hotmail.com



BENEATH THE SURFACE

Christmas Brings Not Peace, But the Sword

Paul Murano
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be those of his own household” (Mt 10:34-36).

These are tough words for delicate modern ears. But they came from the mouth of the Prince of Peace Himself, Jesus the Christ. How can the prince of peace say His coming would cause such division? Let’s go beneath the surface.

Christmas celebrates the coming of Truth Incarnate, when Reality took on a human nature and was born into the world He created. Yet, He was born into a post-Eden world tainted by sin, injustice, and tyranny. It’s a world where weeds and wheat grow together, and where sin and grace coexist.

When Truth enters a world of falsehood and evil it’s more like an earthquake than a merry-go-round. It’s inevitable there will be great strife and division, for not everyone will accept Him. For those who do, they will experience both peace and persecution. Those who do not, however, will remain miserable in their temporary comfort and prestige. Christmas challenges us to choose: the world or God, temporary gratification or fullness of life that endures forever.

How does the existential friction persist? Many loathe truth and goodness and seek to stamp it out because of the way it makes them feel in the midst of their un-repentant sin. This orientation against Christ begins with a hardened heart and continues with a psyche of denial – including self-denial. See how the Left today transfers its own sinful tendencies onto others? That’s what evil does. It assumes everyone else is racist because they are. It accuses everyone else of being anti-science because they are. There is no science more basic than the fact that human individuals begin at conception and that the human species is made up of two biological sexes. To avoid the truth the Left has created language

police, college safe zones, big-tech censorship, and all out assaults on free speech.

They attack Christmas, hate the president, advocate for prenatal murder, and seek to silence and cancel anyone who dares speak the truth on sexuality, marriage, and human life. It’s a denial that skews one’s vision of reality that seeks to re-create truth rather than to accept and conform to it.

Since the Left fears truth, it does not follow, or even respect, science. Nor does it respect religion. It’s no surprise, therefore, when they are reminded of Truth Incarnate each year at this time it causes discomfort. They first reduced Christmas to a secular marketing movement. Today Democrat governors and mayors clamor to quash Christmas joy by using COVID as their excuse.

There can never be peace if it’s based on falsehood, even if everyone agrees. The road to Christmas peace is rocky, and freedom must be constantly fought for, with the shield of justice and the sword of truth. God knows, that like the baby Jesus, those who fight for Truth will not be accepted; there will “no room for them at the Inn.” They will be ridiculed, humiliated and cancelled.

If, however, we persevere to the end carrying our own crosses with courage and conviction, we will be given the prize He won for us on His cross: Perfect and unending peace and joy in union with the child Jesus for all eternity. That’s what Christmas means to humanity. Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to people of good will!



Paul is producer and host of Beneath the Surface video and radio podcasts, teaches philosophy & theology, is a staff writer/producer at St. Michael’s media, and is a singer-songwriter-musician. See his

YouTube page at [Youtube.com/user/Veritas3737/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/Veritas3737/videos) or his personal website at Paulmurano.com. E-mail: PJDM@aol.com.

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Pursuant to the provisions of the revised ordinances of the City of Methuen, Chapter 6,
Sec. 6-23: The Mayor announces the following vacancy with the City of Methuen:

Position Title: Director of Veterans Affairs

General Statement of Duties: Responsible for outreach to, advocating for & providing veterans services on behalf of all veterans within the City of Methuen inclusive of but not limited to: engaging with & identifying the veteran community within the City of Methuen, establishing regular outreach events for veterans within the City; emergency financial assistance programs; annuities of 100% disabled veterans; housing & shelter assistance; veterans license plates; employment & educational opportunities-inclusive of networking & mentoring; funeral assistance to veterans & their families; burial markers; & free internment in state memorial cemeteries; as well as any other similar duties under the federal, state & local laws, rules & regulations pertaining to veterans services. This function is to deliver essential services to the veterans & dependents residing in Methuen, Massachusetts. This position is a member of Middle Management & as such rep011s directly to the Mayor of the City of Methuen.

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- * Identify, prepare, & execute approved milestone plan for annual outreach events & marketing within the City of Methuen to maximize the inclusion of veterans within the City, & ensure awareness & participation in all available programs to them; develop metrics to rep011 engagement service levels
 - o Develop a communication plan across multiple mediums to ensure inclusion & tracking of all eligible veterans within the City of Methuen
- * Responsible for preparation & submittal of annual department budget; as well as monitoring & maintaining budget within authorized limit
- * Prepare & submit a variety of periodic rep011s including but not limited to: all required federal, state & local reporting requirements; annual city rep011; Quarterly engagement, outreach & assistance provided reports; employees time sheet; & others as required
- * Audit & recalculation of authorized veterans' benefits budgets; issue Notices of Determination &/or Notices of Action. Audit state reimbursements & Veterans benefits expenses & amend as needed.
- * Regularly communicate status of the Veterans Affairs department through a variety of forums including but not limited to the Mayor & staff; Veterans Agencies within the City of Methuen, & City Council as required
- * Process & distribute veterans benefit payments, verify applicant's income as well as employment searches. Implement & conduct appropriate case investigation plans, process for terminations, &/or refunds when required. Counsel & instruct veteran applicants regarding employment searches, process for termination
- * Participate in & ensure lessons learned from various meetings such as Veterans Service Officers Association; applicable sessions with the VFW Post #8349 & comm&ing officers; American Legion Post #122 & comm&ing officers. Attend annual conferences, training seminars, & other events to stay current with events & changing regulations & maximize outreach & engagement.
- * Engage with other City departments (ex. Methuen Police & Fire Departments) to identify & engage with any veteran requiring assistance
- * Contacts employment offices, schools, hospitals, & other agencies to secure & arrange for aid to veterans; coordinates with nursing homes to ensure full benefits are received.
- * Track & engage with veterans returning from service; conduct initial reach out & awareness interview within 45 days of return to City.
- * Coordinate various community activities in partnership with veterans organizations within the City; examples include but are not limited to Memorial Day activities / parade; Veteran's Day activities /parade; purchasing & placement plan for memorial flags; & processing of reimbursement claims.
- * Act as burial agent &/or graves registration officer for securing burial allowance & grave markers; ensures that all veterans graves & memorials are maintained properly.
 - o Monitor & communicate veteran obituaries & ensure sympathy/benefit cards mailed to family; obtain DD-214's & Coordinate military honor guards as required.
- * Perform any other similar duties as prescribed by Federal, State or Local law, regulation, or procedure.
- * Conduct public information campaign to ensure that the eligible client population is aware of current laws & they should, themselves, keep current with all changes.

<p>Qualifications: REQUIRED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Director of Veterans Services Must be a veteran in accordance with state law & must hold a valid Driver's License.• Must maintain & not violate access to confidential information.• Education & Experience: Bachelor's Degree & one to three years' experience in a related field, or an equivalent combination of education & experience in veteran's services, human relations, social services, or business.• Must be able to work independently & complete work in a timely accurate manner within deadlines.• Must have the ability to read & interpret benefit eligibility requirements & respond to applicant needs in a sensitive manner• Must be able to communicate effectively in both oral & written communications• Must demonstrate skill in working with people	<p>DESIRED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A working or thorough knowledge of state & federal laws & regulations governing the provision of Veterans Services• A working knowledge of computers & Microsoft Office 365• Familiar with the City of Methuen & its government.• Familiar with, or an active Member of, the City of Methuen's veterans' services.
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Salary Range: \$59,317-69,063 annually (depending on experience) This position is recognized in the Methuen's Middle Management Association Union. Submit application to: City of Methuen, Human Resource Department, Room 206, 41 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844 or email to HumanResources@cityofMethuen.net The City of Methuen is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer & service provider. The City does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, religious creed, genetics, veteran status, disability, or age in our programs, activities, & employment practices. Any person who needs assistance in fully participating in the application process should contact: Lisa Crowley, Dir. of Human Resources, at 978-983-8576 or email LCrowley@cityofMethuen.net

Preference is given to those who apply before December 4, 2020. Posting will remain open until filled.

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